

Suggested Remarks
Jon D. Lindborg
USAID Mission Director
US-Asia Environmental Partnership
Lessons Learned Conference
Heritage Hotel Ballroom, August 17, 2005,
9:00 a.m.

Honorable Michael Defensor, Department of
Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)
Secretary;

Honorable Mary Jane Ortega, LCP Executive
Vice-President and Mayor of San Fernando
City, La Union;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen!

I am honored to welcome all of you as we
celebrate the numerous partnerships that the
United States-Asia Environmental Partnership
helped establish and nurture over the past
10 years, as well as the fruitful benefits
of these partnerships.

In this conference we will be looking back at important achievements over the years. But I also believe that this conference will inspire us to find new ways to continue to improve urban environmental conditions in the Philippines.

As the most significant source of the world's expanding urban population, cities in Asia face the greatest environmental challenges. They have fast-growing economies and accelerating urbanization and industrial growth.

The list of environmental challenges is long and well known to us: vehicular exhaust and industrial emissions polluting the air; unmanaged waste clogging waterways; untreated wastewater contaminating groundwater and polluting water systems; open spaces lost; and soil eroding due to uplands deforestation. The effects are quite alarming. According to the World Bank, health costs due to air pollution in

four major Philippine cities in 2002 was estimated at \$400 million. In that same year, water pollution imposed an economic cost of \$1.3 billion and waterborne-diseases accounted for 30% of reported illnesses.

Clean air, clean water, biodiversity and healthy ecosystems—these are not privileges. “A balanced and healthful ecology”, according to your Constitution, is every Filipino’s right. It is what every Filipino deserves.

In the past decade, the Philippine Congress has enacted laws precisely to ensure its citizens’ birthright. Recognizing the costs of air, water and soil pollution to the economy and to human health, several laws, such as the Clean Water Act, the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act and the Hazardous Waste Management Act have been enacted. The DENR and many local governments have also successfully implemented environmental programs.

Ensuring this birthright is not an easy task. It is not the national government nor the local government, nor the NGOs role alone. It is everyone's role, as we you will hear from the several US-AEP Partnership Success Stories that will be shared during conference.

These stories, will help remind us that successful partnerships are sustained by a shared vision among partners and a willingness to try new approaches. For example, the clean air program in Puerto Princesa City developed the "50:50 Traffic Scheme" where tricycle drivers and operators agreed to retire their vehicles on certain days of the week. Although there was resistance from some of the tricycle drivers and operators, I was told that the partners were generally willing to try the scheme. The results? Increased profits for the drivers; more time for other livelihood

activities; less congestion; and better air quality for Puerto Princesa City.

These stories also show that, while there are traditional or institutional roles that stakeholders must play, a shift in roles and responsibilities among partners is not unusual. For example, in the Philippine Environmental Partnership Program, industry associations have taken up the task of self-regulation, policing its member industries to comply with environmental standards, a mandate that DENR would otherwise traditionally fulfill.

One other important factor for success is the strong political will and commitment to pursue goals. I am not referring only to politicians--although many of you would agree with me that government officials who have championed environmental causes can truly work wonders--, but I am referring to everyone's political will to change attitudes and behaviors and the commitment

to work collectively to improve urban environmental conditions. For example, we will hear at this conference about communities and NGOs showing strong political will and insisting that they be heard by their local governments. We will hear stories of LGUs that have shown strong political will to enforce the law.

As a development agency that supports Philippine development goals of achieving sustainable economic growth, peace and prosperity, USAID is honored to have facilitated these lasting partnerships.

So, congratulations to all of you and I wish you a productive conference. I hope that we will take the opportunity to strengthen and renew our ties while building new ones today and tomorrow.

Thank you very much and good morning!

